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R E P O R T

OF A

COMMITTEE OF THE REPRESENTATIVES

OF

New York Yearly Meeting of Friends

UPON THE

CONDITION AND WANTS

OF THE



COLORED REFUGEES.

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At a Special REPRESENTATIVE MEETING, held in New York, 24th of 12th month, 1862, the Committee appointed to investigate the condition and wants of the Colored Refugees in the neighborhood of Washington, Fort Monroe, and other places, made the following Report, which was ordered to be printed for distribution.

WILLIAM WOOD,
Clerk.

REPORT.

PURSUANT to appointment, the committee have visited Washington, Alexandria, Fort Monroe, Hampton, Norfolk, and Craney Island, and have had full opportunity of seeing several thousand of the refugees, of all ages and conditions. We received polite attention from all the officers of government upon whom we called, and every facility to accomplish the desired investigation.

During this engagement, we have met with much to interest us and excite our sympathy in behalf of multitudes of our fellow-men, now passing through painful vicissitudes, in their transition from a state of bondage and degradation to an unknown future, which, though enveloped in present darkness, and filled with trial and sorrow, is yet lighted by hope, and cheered and comforted by faith and trust in the wisdom and mercy of the Almighty.

In attempting to describe the condition of these people, scenes of deep interest which we have witnessed, rise up be-

fore us ; and we feel unable to do justice to the subject by a brief report. We adopt the form of a narrative as the more convenient ; and, in order to condense it within reasonable limits, many conversations and subjects of interest are necessarily omitted.

The present shelter of the refugees in Washington is called Camp Barker. We visited it on the 25th of 11th month. It consists of a large oblong square, surrounded on three sides by huts or barracks, and other buildings, all opening within the square ; and by a high fence on the west side. The entrance is under a military guard. The huts, about forty-eight in number, are about twelve feet square, and each have from ten to twelve inmates. There are also several large tents, occupied by old or infirm men, and two buildings called hospitals—one for men, and one for women. The residence of the superintendent is within the enclosure.

The whole camp is under the care of a superintendent, with one assistant, and one doctor, who are appointed and paid by government. There are also two matrons appointed, paid by the Freedmen's Association of Washington.

The superintendent reported as follows :

There were 400 in camp, on the 16th of June (when he came). Since then there have come in 3,350—making a total of 3,750. Of these 280 have died. The present number is from 600 to 650, of whom 231 are children. The rest have found employment about Washington in various service—excepting about 20 who have gone North. They generally object to go there on account of the cold. There are 125 sick, all of whom have been sent in from other places, except about 25 who have sickened in the camp. This place is the general receptacle for the sick of about 6,000 refugees in and around Washington. The superintendent did not report the number of births, but they are not equal to the deaths.

The government gives employment to all the able-bodied men, at wages according to their service, from \$12 to \$25 per month, and all have rations except the teamsters, at the latter rate. There are about 100 women, who go out to day's work, returning at night to camp. They are said to earn fifty cents per day.

Apart from the crowded condition of these people, and their deficiency of clothing, those who were well appeared tolerably comfortable. The sick in hospital were in a miserable condition. In consequence of necessary repairs to the men's hospital, all the sick were crowded in the women's hospital. This was ill-ventilated, and disgusting in the extreme. Those with whom we spoke complained of cold ; but the state of the air was such that we could not remain in it long enough for intelligent inquiry. Some were reported to be in a dying condition ; and all the circumstances of the hospital seemed to us inexcusably bad. The north side of the camp was not weather-proof—some of the women remarked that “the rain came in like a spring” and wet their beds.

The dead-house contained twelve bodies, mostly laid in an irregular heap. Some of them lay in their clothes, and the bodies were stiffened in various forms. The appearance of these gave rise to the most unfavorable conclusions as to the care bestowed upon them during their last hours. Several had been brought in from other places, and were carefully wrapped in a suitable covering. The interments were reported to be made by a government contractor, who performed the duty as it suited his convenience. Sometimes as many as twenty bodies accumulated, and remained as long as a week or more.

The neighborhood of the camp was not properly drained. There were ponds of water that could easily be removed ; and it appeared to be wanting in many accommodations necessary to the health and convenience of its inmates. Upon the whole, we thought the camp sadly deficient in almost every respect. The chief wants were a good hospital, prop-

erly warmed and ventilated, and a supply of hot and cold water, with conveniences for washing and bathing, so that the sick might be kept clean and comfortable. A sympathizing and competent doctor, and a sufficient number of nurses, could easily accomplish this result so necessary to the restoration of health. A superintendent who would enforce order and cleanliness, and the faithful performance of duties, could remedy much existing evil.*

We went to Alexandria on the 26th, and called on the acting superintendent of the colored refugees there, under the Provost Marshal. He informed us there were, on the 12th of October, 1,230 refugees of all ages and conditions, quartered in twenty-five houses. We visited a considerable number of them. One had been formerly used as a slave-pen by a trader. Although the poor people were unreasonably crowded in the two wings, it was interesting to contemplate the difference between its present and former uses. Then it was the entrance into the darkness of hopeless bondage ; now the vestibule of hoped-for freedom !

Of the number above stated there were 475 men and 276 women and 439 children ; and also, of men, women, and children in the smallpox hospital, 40. All of these drew rations except 85 men, 56 women and 40 children. There were about 100 sick adults of diseases other than smallpox, and as many more unable to work.

They are quartered in small rooms, about 12 feet square, and average from 10 to 12 persons in each. They were generally associated together in families, and several families occasionally in one room. We were told that about two thirds are married.

All the able-bodied men and women, not obliged to take care of the children, are at work. The men earn about \$20 per month, and the women from \$2 to \$6 per month, with

* Since the committee were at this camp, Dr. Breed has been appointed as acting Surgeon, with authority to secure a good assistant physician, nurses, &c.

rations. There appears to be no precise record of these people, except as to the rations, of which an account is kept by the commissary. Most of the particulars are given from memory.

We did not go to the house in which the 40 patients with the smallpox were quartered. The patients were removed to this house when the disease appeared. The poor people seemed very much neglected. In one large room called a school-house, there were about 120 ; and the fires of wood served to fill the room with smoke, while they gave but little heat. Many of their rooms were miserable hovels ; and the quantity of wood allowed for fires was not sufficient to keep them tolerably warm. This was the cause of much suffering and illness.

In the locality called Fishtown, the colored people were in the worst condition. The houses and hovels were dilapidated and miserable. One woman, who had a child in her arms, was endeavoring to obtain warmth from a poor smoking log of wood. In reply, she stated that she had come from the Rappahannock because others came. Her old cabin was very comfortable ; she "hated to leave it because she had in it so many things." Her heart was with her household treasures in the old cabin, and in the absence of all these,—with scanty clothing, and nothing but a cold and desolate room, filled with smoke, the contrast must have been great.

One man in the same house, seemed anxious for us to visit his family, in an upper room. In silence he led the way up the dilapidated staircase, and into the room. The poor man's heart seemed full ; and words were not needed to understand and sympathize. The first object that attracted attention, was the corpse of a youth, laid out near the door, and covered with a white cloth. In reply, he said it was that of his son, who had died last night. Had been sick about ten days with pains in the head and back—suffered from cold—and gradually became worse, until he died. Another son was lying sick upon the floor, wrapped up in coarse clothing and suffering

from similar disease, but knew not what it was. The wife was engaged with the younger children near some smoking embers, which yielded but little of the needful warmth. The scene was impressive and touching in the extreme.

There was here an interesting school for boys and girls, taught by two colored teachers who had been educated in the North, and who were intelligent and efficient. The number of scholars was 160—half taught in the daytime and half in the evening. There were two rooms occupied by these schools—one about 12 by 15, and the other 10 by 12. The scholars paid 50 cents to \$1 dollar per month each, and the school is self-sustaining. The pupils appeared to be well taught, and very promising. They read well, and apparently understood figures on the black board, although the school had been in operation only a few weeks.

Upon the whole, we regarded the condition of the refugees about Alexandria as very far from what it ought to be. In some respects it was not unfavorable; but in others it showed a want of attention to the ordinary requirements of tolerable existence. They expressed almost without exception, a preference for their present condition with freedom, to a more favorable one in slavery; because, as they said, they would have at least what they earned, and enjoy the fruits of their own labor; while in slavery, their masters took all and returned them but little.

We were informed that clothing was wanted for women and children and blankets; a few pieces of calico and flannel would be very useful.*

On our return to Washington we called, by appointment, on the military governor of Washington, and described to him the condition of the refugees, as it had been seen by ourselves that day. General Martindale listened with polite attention to our report, and admitted that much of it was

* Since the above was written, we have been informed that government has ordered barracks to be erected here, so that they will be better accommodated.

new and unexpected to him. He informed us that he had held his present appointment but six days, and during that time had not any opportunity to visit the camp. He then asked whether we had any suggestions to make ; and after hearing us fully, assured us he would do all he could to remedy any neglect, and alleviate the sufferings of the people.

In the evening we called on the Attorney-General, at his own residence, in company with two friends, by whom we were introduced ; and the next day on the President, and the Secretary of War. We explained to them the objects of our visit, and also reported what we had seen in Washington and Alexandria, believing that, in the multiplicity of their engagements, they were uninformed of the facts, and urging the importance of prompt measures to remedy existing evils. We were received with great kindness ; and full approbation was expressed of the motives and action of Friends in this matter. The President was glad that Friends were ready to aid in the relief of these people. We assured him he had our full sympathy, and that of our Friends, in the cares and responsibilities which devolved upon him ; that our object was not to add to those cares, but to do what little we could towards relieving them. We had an interesting interview, and took leave of him with renewed interest in his behalf.

The Secretary of War expressed his gratification with our appointment, and hoped we would make a full investigation, as far as we could do so ; and desired that we should send him a copy of our report, together with any suggestion of a practical character which we might wish to make. He expressed his desire to do all he could for the welfare and prosperity of the refugees, and remarked that he would be glad to employ conscientious and competent members of the Society of Friends, more especially doctors, whom they could recommend, as willing to devote their time and talents for the benefit of these people. The Attorney-General spoke of the questions arising out of the condition of the colored people

as of the greatest importance. He desired the Society of Friends would not confine their thoughts to their present physical wants, but that they would also direct their attention to the future welfare of the vast numbers in the country, whose condition was likely to be changed from Slavery to Freedom.

We left Washington on the 28th, and reached Baltimore in time to take the evening boat, for Fort Monroe, where we arrived in the morning of the 29th. The provost marshal informed us that General Dix was absent from the Fort, and on inquiring for C. B. Wilder, superintendent of the refugees, we were directed to his office. We accordingly called, and found him in a small office adjoining the quarters of the refugees ; it was partly filled with goods, and altogether too small for the duties of his appointment. He received us cordially.

The number of refugees in this vicinity were reported to us as follows :

	Men.	Women and Children.	
At Fort Monroe.....	1,000	600....	400
			$\overbrace{200 \dots 200}$
			} Under C. B. Wilder, Super.
At Hampton, and Camp Hamilton, and surroundings.....	2,500	of all classes.	
At Fort Norfolk.....	632	12....	374....246, under John Dawson.
At Craney Island.....	1,128	200....	539....290, under Dr. Brown. Men and women, over 12 ; children under.
At Norfolk.....	794	—416....	147....164
And Sick.....	—	45....	12....10
Total.....	6,054		

We were informed that there were considerable numbers at Yorktown, Suffolk, and Portsmouth, but could not learn how many were there.

The government gives employment to all the able-bodied men. Some of the women are employed also, but most of the women and children are without employment. The rate of wages, as we understood, was, at Fort Monroe, \$10 per month, and rations. But little of the wages had been paid.

The women and children have no rations here, and depend upon occasional employment and charity for subsistence.

We were lodged and entertained very kindly by Doctor Crooker and associates, at the quarters of the medical staff of the military hospital here. The hospital appeared in excellent order, and has 300 beds. There were only 60 patients when we were there.

General Dix received us kindly, on the morning of the 30th, and promptly expressed his willingness to give us every opportunity to accomplish the object of our visit. He entered into the details of his action on behalf of the refugees since he had command of this district ; and gave us, at length, his reasons for desiring their removal beyond the prejudicial influences of military camps. In the absence of any better arrangement he had ordered the erection of barracks at Craney Island, for the reception of all not employed by government. He had reason to believe that the people could support themselves by fishing for oysters, &c.

Our interview with the general was very agreeable, and we have no doubt of his desire to make these people comfortable. Their general industry was acknowledged, and it is borne out by the fact that a large amount of money is due to them, for arrears of wages. There appears to be a difference of opinion as to the precise sum, but we understood the general to admit, from a cursory examination of the books, that there was as much as \$25,000, still due.* He informed us that the quartermaster had \$7,000 on hand towards its payment, and expected as much more shortly. On leaving, the general gave us a letter to Captain Ludlow, assistant quartermaster at Norfolk, requesting him to show the condition of the colored people there, and at Craney Island.

Our information respecting the employment, treatment, and condition, of these people at Fort Monroe, was derived, chiefly, from the superintendent.

* We have been informed, that since our return, an official investigation has been made, and the amount of arrears ascertained to be over \$30,000.

The men are said to work well. They are kept at work all day, and sometimes called upon to work at nights, and on the first day of the week, in cases of emergency. We were informed that they were treated very roughly ; sometimes abused and maimed, by the brutality of those under whom they work. We were witness of one case of abuse on our arrival at Fort Monroe, by a white man, who appeared to have the superintendence of discharging the freight of the steamboat, in which we came from Norfolk ; but, whether he was a government employee, or connected with the boat, we did not learn.

We were told of numerous instances and circumstances tending to show, that there is here a strong influence exerted against the refugees ; but as these did not come under our own observation, we can only refer to them as subjects of common remark, without attempting to conjecture the motive. If, however, it be true, as charged, that they are worked hard, badly treated, and all their wages kept back except their rations and a scanty pittance, wholly insufficient to enable them to purchase the necessary clothing for themselves, and provide for their families, then it would seem that, in this respect, they are worse off than they were in slavery ; and it may account for the instances reported to us, by General Dix, in which some of them applied to him for permission to return to their masters, within the lines ; which permission he did not feel authorized to refuse, because, while under military authority, they were, by order of Congress "to be considered and treated as freemen." It did not occur to us to inquire whether the accounts of these freemen had been settled, and their wages paid, before they returned again to the slavery from which they had fled. We have no idea that the kind-hearted general had any suspicion of the motives of these voluntary slaves, or any knowledge of their treatment as freemen, which made slavery more pleasant in their eyes. But, under the circumstances, we cannot regard these instances as any proof that they would prefer

slavery, provided they should, in freedom, be treated as men, and not as mere brutes. Neither do we regard their destitute condition, as to clothing, any evidence of inability to take care of themselves, as well as any other race in like condition. Both of these ideas are at variance with common sense, and are contradicted by the cloud of witnesses we have seen, and by all the facts that have come within our knowledge. But, even if true in some individual cases, they only serve by their rarity, to establish the contrary rule.

We attended the first part of a meeting for worship of the colored refugees, held at three o'clock, on the afternoon of the 30th. When we entered, they were all kneeling, at prayer ; and one of them, in simple eloquence, was pleading at the throne of Infinite Mercy, for aid to overcome the evil of their hearts, and live in obedience to His law ; that they might be enabled to bear with patience all the troubles of life, and when all was over, be received in mansions of eternal rest ! They then united in singing. The air was plaintive, but the words were not understood by us. At its conclusion, they again knelt in prayer. After acknowledging the evil of their past lives, the speaker pleaded for mercy and forgiveness, and for help in the future. He remembered the strangers now with them, for whom he asked the blessing of the Most High. Then he prayed for the President of the United States; that he might be preserved, comforted, and strengthened by Almighty power ; that he might be endowed with wisdom, and enabled to perform the will of Heaven ; also, for the Union and the rulers of the nation, and its armies ;—that the Lord would be with them, and strengthen them to overcome all enemies, and re-establish the laws, and maintain the rights of all. Our hearts were touched by these simple, but fervent petitions, and we realized afresh the assurance : “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”

We reached Norfork in the evening of the 30th. The

next morning we called on Captain Ludlow, who promptly arranged for our visiting the several camps. We first went to the depot of clothing kept for sale to the colored laborers, and were shown a fair assortment of serviceable material ; much of it being ready-made clothing. Captain Ludlow then politely accompanied us to the camp called the Pest House, the name being derived from a building upon the ground formerly used for that purpose. On the way he showed us the soldiers' cemetery, which he had made. It was nicely arranged, and a neat head-board told the name and particulars of the deceased soldier. The camp was something like Camp Barker, in Washington, but less comfortable, excepting the hospital, which was incomparably better. The most of the patients here were tolerably comfortable, yet there was not sufficient care taken to preserve cleanliness and proper ventilation. One man, upwards of 60 years of age, was suffering from rheumatism ; upon being asked his name and where he came from, and why he left his master, he replied, that he came from North Carolina, because of the ill-treatment of his son, a boy of 16 years, who was owned by another master by whom he was constantly abused. He expressed his own desire to return, because his wife and other children were there. His son had gone on board a vessel for New York. Upon learning that his visitor came from New York, his countenance lighted up with all the interest of a father, and he expressed a lively desire that he might see his son and inform him of this interview. When asked what message he had for his son, he desired that he might come home to his mother. When told that he was free in New York and would be a slave in North Carolina, the old man promptly replied, "Oh, no, sir ; there is to be no more of that after New Year." He could not tell who informed him of this, but he had heard it, and appeared to think of it as a settled fact in the near future. Similar expressions of confidence in obtaining freedom at New Year were heard from several in different places.

The condition of the people at this camp was less favorable because of the preparation to remove them all to Craney Island. We were informed that about 150 men were employed as wood-choppers, and 250 as stevedores. Some were paid 50 cents per cord with rations, and others \$10 per month and rations. Captain Ludlow furnished a small steam-boat to convey us to Craney Island and Fort Norfolk, and a letter to Dr. Brown, the superintendent. We arrived at the island about 12 o'clock, and found the Doctor very much occupied with the duties of his office. He received us very cordially, and urged us to remain some days with him, offering to accommodate us as well as he was able. His wife and two children composed his family. He gave us full particulars respecting the refugees on the island, nearly all of whom are now quartered in tents until the completion of the barracks, which he was preparing for them. On our way to these, we visited most of the tents and found the people cheerful and busily engaged with sundry occupations.

Dr. Brown, who has been in the army, reports that he has no difficulty in keeping proper order and discipline on the island. He has a military guard and a full corps of subordinate officers, who, after the labors of the day report to him at seven o'clock in the evening, when their duties for the next day are assigned. Some of the colored men are employed in fishing for oysters, and the Doctor expects to employ a considerable number in that way. The island is too small to give employment in agriculture in which most of these people have heretofore been engaged, and in which the Doctor has no doubt they could easily support themselves.

We inquired of many where they came from, and why they left their masters. Generally the latter question seemed to excite surprise or incredulity, but the answer was nearly the same in all cases : they came away for their freedom, so that they might enjoy the reward of their own labor ; but that if they could have this at home they would rather go back and live where they had lived. Not one of all the multitude, whom we saw, was desirous of going North. They said it was too cold.

We were much gratified with our visit to Craney Island ; not so much for what it was, as what the superintendent desired to make it. The vigilance, discipline, and order of Dr. Brown, and his kindly interest for the welfare of the poor people under his charge, convinced us that he was the right man for his appointment. He exhibited to us his stock of clothing, consisting chiefly of partly worn garments, which had been sent from kind friends in the North. He showed us a box of shoes for women and children, containing about 40 or 50 pair, contributed by a poor man in Massachusetts, who makes a living for himself and wife by peddling shoes. It reminded us of the widow's mite.

Dr. Brown informed us that the government does not intend to furnish school-houses, or places of worship for these people. These must be contributed by private subscription. He desires to have a building that will accommodate a large number. If the friends of the colored people will supply the material, the Doctor will have it put together. There will probably be more than one thousand desirous of attending public worship ; and he would like to have it large enough for all. We met two young men on the island who had recently arrived to offer their services as teachers. In the absence of school-houses, they were busily engaged in other useful and more pressing services.

We called at Fort Norfolk on our return. Here we found the superintendent, John Dawson, in the midst of his sable charge. He informed us that there had been as many as 962 at this place, but that all the able-bodied men had been taken away for various government employ, so that the present number was reduced to 632, all women and children but 12 old or infirm men. Of these, about 50 were sick—chiefly of measles and hooping-cough, and diseases from exposure. There were more deaths than births. The condition of these people appeared very unfavorable ; many of them had on their backs the same clothes in which they left their former homes several weeks before. Many were wretchedly clad.

Altogether, they presented a miserable appearance. They were quartered chiefly in a large warehouse, formerly used to store guano. This building had no chimneys, and the fires of wood filled it with smoke so as to cause tears to run from the eyes of many of the little children ; yet they were all wonderfully patient, and not a cry was heard from any of them. Most of those with whom we conversed were from North Carolina. One man, about 60 years old, informed us that he was a cabinetmaker and turner by trade ; that he came away when opportunity offered, because he wanted to be free. He had paid his master \$300 per annum for 17 years, and \$250 for the last three years, so that in 20 years he had paid him near \$6,000. He thought that was enough and was tired of it. When asked what his master had done for him during this time, he promptly replied : " About as much as you, sir ;" but presently correcting himself, added, " no, sir, not quite so much as you, for he never inquired so kindly after me as you have done." " Well, but did he not furnish food and clothing ?" " No, sir, I had to supply all that myself."

One woman, in reply to the usual question, why she came away, and whether she would not like to go back, if assured of her freedom at her old home, replied : " No, sir, I never want to see the place again." When asked why, she said she would rather live anywhere else, she had been so badly treated—and never wanted to see the place again ! There was no lack of intelligence in this woman ; but the associations of her former home were such as to destroy all attraction toward the scenes of her childhood. During this conversation, a large crowd of women collected, evidently anxious to hear all that the strangers had to say. Upon being inquired of, collectively, whether any present wished to go into the North, not one appeared willing ; but all seemed to shrink from the idea, and said it was too cold. The poor people appeared to think that our visit was designed for their benefit, in some way ; and when informed of its objects, they were

wild in their expressions of joy and thanks. One old woman said she had been praying for us to come, and had full faith that we would come. That when she saw us land, she blessed God that her prayer had been heard and answered. They said in substance: "We will endure this suffering in patience, for the sake of the prospect of freedom. We are patient through all, because we see a good time coming. We pray the good Lord for all Union-men constantly." When we came away they followed us in a crowd to the end of the pier, and as the steamboat moved off, raised their hands, and waived us adieu.

In conversation with John Dawson, he had no doubt that all these people could easily support themselves, if they had the opportunity, either upon the land, or in other fields of industry. He showed us some excellent oaken baskets made by them, and worth from 50 cents to 75 cents each. The material for these was found in unlimited quantity in the adjacent woods. He also showed us a scow which had been made and calked by some of the men under his charge. It was well done. It was intended, shortly, to remove them all to Craney Island, and for this reason less preparation had been made for their accommodation.

We returned to Fort Monroe on the morning of 12th month 2d, and occupied the rest of the day with our kind friend C. B. Wilder, who, for the sake of the poor and friendless, has for many months denied himself the enjoyments of home, in order to minister to their aid and protection. In witnessing the sound judgment, firmness and tact, yet the evident kindness, with which he promptly disposed of the incessant applications of the colored people, we were forcibly struck with the value of his disinterested services—not less to the government than to the subjects of his care. Hitherto he has devoted his time without pecuniary reward, in this important but thankless office.

We returned to Baltimore by the evening boat, and after again visiting Washington and Philadelphia, reached

New York on the evening of the 5th, after an absence of 12 days from our homes.

When in Baltimore, Washington, and Fort Monroe, we visited some of the hospitals for the sick and wounded soldiers. In every instance we found them in the most favorable condition. The beds and clothing were clean ; the ventilation good, and the medical aid and attention, all that could be expected. In Baltimore, especially, we were gratified with the unremitting attention of benevolent ladies, whose kind care for the sufferers was generally acknowledged, and filled their hearts with gratitude.

In conversing with the several superintendents of the refugees, relative to their ability to support themselves, there appeared a remarkable unanimity of opinion, although they were all in somewhat different circumstances. C. B. Wilder, after an experience of eight or nine months' constant intercourse with hundreds of them, had no doubt, that, if they had a fair chance to work, and were paid their wages regularly, they would not only support themselves but all the women and children. No men could show greater industry and alacrity to work when employed on "a cash job." They not only have a full appreciation of money, but of its absence when due for work, and not paid. Similar assurances were given us by Doctor Brown on Craney Island, John Dawson, at Fort Norfolk, and others who had the means of forming impartial opinions.

Considering the hard work which they perform, the many privations they have to suffer, and the absence of their wages (beyond their rations), it is remarkable that they should perform so well. But their hope is strong, and their faith firm, that a good day is coming, and not far distant. When, therefore, we reflect upon their present circumstances and past history, we can perceive nothing to shake the opinion of these experienced and sympathizing superintendents. These people have heretofore, by their labor, produced not only enough for their own support, but for that of their

masters ! To assert in the face of this fact that these men, whose industry has been so fruitful, cannot take care of themselves without the aid of a *white man* to consume in idleness or luxury the proceeds of their labor, is to impeach the wisdom of the Creator ; and to claim immunity for the rapacious inventions of man, in the pretended omissions of his Maker !

On our way from Washington, we learned from a gentleman well acquainted with North Carolina, that there is now a great scarcity of laborers in the northeastern part, in consequence of the escape of the slaves ; and that many people there are suffering serious inconvenience and loss for want of their services.

We feel the vast importance of a correct and clear conclusion upon this branch of our inquiry, because it must have a controlling influence upon every honest man, whose opinion or action may affect the condition and welfare of millions of the human family. “To him who knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” Therefore, lest some of our readers may doubt the facts we have reported, or our judgment upon them, and in view of the request before mentioned, that we should look beyond the present wants of these people, we will adduce the testimony of other witnesses respecting the same race in different localities, and various periods. The following are extracts from a letter published in the Alton Telegraph, and dated October 13th, 1862. Speaking of the refugees whom he had lately seen at Lawrence (Kansas), the writer says :

“ As I learned that all the children of this school, had, within a few months, been rescued from Slavery, I expected to see a motley, lawless group of little, ragged, dirty children, something like those gathered up at the Five Points, in New York. But not a bit of it ! *Not a bit of it !* For cleanliness, neatness, order, general good behavior, and apparent comfort, I have seldom seen a Sunday School that excelled it. Many of the little girls had neat straw bonnets, of the latest fashion, ornamented with a profusion of flowers and ribbons,

and with such regard to colors, too, as might repulse every suspicion of disloyalty. ‘Why,’ said I to the Superintendent, ‘it must have cost the citizens a good deal of money to dress up all these children in this style.’ ‘Not a cent, not a cent, sir!’ said he. ‘Every one of these is dressed at the expense of their parents, from the proceeds of their own earnings since they have been here.’

* * * * *

“Most of them (the negroes), in and about this town and vicinity, have emigrated from Missouri and Arkansas within a few months. Although they amount to many hundreds, not one, that I could learn of, has been a public expense. They readily get employment, and fair wages, which enables them at once to make themselves and families comfortable. A benevolent gentleman, on whom they are accustomed to call on their first entry into the place, usually tells them where they can get employment, and further inquires into their circumstances ; and if he finds they need a shovel, an axe, or a pair of shoes he gives them an order on a store for such articles, and states, in the order, that if the bearer does not pay for them, in a reasonable length of time, he will. This gentleman told me, that he had recently called at the store, to learn the state of his account, and he found of five or six hundred dollars charged to him on these orders within a few months, *all but eight dollars had been paid by the contrabands themselves.*”

The testimony of the late John McDonogh, of New-Orleans, is very full, and directly to the point. In a letter to the New Orleans Bulletin, in 1842, he describes the arrangement he made with his slaves, by which they worked out their own freedom.

Having given them one half of one day in the week, to prevent the necessity of their working on the first day of the week, he observed the amount of money earned by them in that half day, and was led to calculate in what length of time they would be enabled to purchase the remaining five and a half days of the week, and by that means obtain freedom for themselves and children. He estimated that it would require them to work, early and late, *for fifteen years*. After deliberate consideration, concluding it was his own

interest to have this accomplished, he made the proposition to them, and made one condition, that they should tell no one. They received it with expressions of great joy and thanks ; and after reflecting upon it for a week, agreed to carry it out ; which they accomplished. From that day their industry was unremitting, early in the morning and late at night, until it attracted the attention of the neighbors, and McDonogh was looked upon as a very severe and cruel master, obliging his people to work until, and after midnight. He was even waited upon by a kind-hearted friend, who sought to ascertain the facts, and to shield him from reproach. In reference to the remarkable industry of these people McDonogh remarks :

" I will now give another instance (I could relate hundreds) going to show the effect of that hope, that charm of man's existence, ' Liberty,' on the life and actions of those people. Some years since, some twenty or thirty of those people were engaged in erecting some extensive brick warehouses on Julia street, in New Orleans (for they were excellent mechanics of various trades, and were in the habit of making brick, purchasing shells and burning lime, sawing timber, and then taking the materials, when made, and building them up into fine houses, on both sides of the river, for their master), near to the residence of Edward E. Parker, Esq., one of our most wealthy and respectable citizens, a gentleman who was in the habit of building very extensively himself in the city. Meeting Mr. Parker, on a certain day, in a street of New Orleans, I was accosted and asked whether I would sell him a certain black man named Jim, or James. Having several men by that name, I inquired which James, when he observed, the one who was at the head of the bricklayers who were erecting those warehouses on Julia street, near to his (Mr. Parker's) residence. I replied to him no ; that I was not in the habit of selling people ; that I purchased occasionally, but never sold. Mr. Parker then observed, that he wished I would depart in the present instance from my general rule, and agree to sell him that man ; that he was very desirous of possessing him ; that as he was erecting several buildings, the man would suit him ; and that he would give a good price for him. I again said to him that the man was not for sale, and was

about to leave him, when he observed : ‘ Could you not be tempted, sir, to sell him ? I will give you \$2,500 for him, in cash.’ I told Mr. Parker it did not tempt me, and we separated. A week or two thereafter, I met Mr. Parker again, and was again accosted on the same subject, with, ‘ Do, Mr. McDonogh, sell me that man ; I will give you \$3,000 for him.’ Again I made him the same answer, that he was not for sale. Again and again we met in the streets, and, each time the same request, by raising the offer of price at each interview, until at last Mr. Parker informed me that he would pay me \$5,000 in cash for him. Feeling at length a little vexed at those repeated demands, I said to Mr. Parker, ‘ Though you are a very rich man, sir, your whole fortune could not purchase that man—not that he is worth it, or worth more than any other man, or any of the others, but because he is not to be sold.’ Mr. Parker, finding, at length, from the refusal of such a large sum of money for him, that there was no hope of obtaining him, observed to me, ‘ Well, then, Mr. McDonogh, seeing now that you will not sell him at any price, tell me, what kind of people are those of yours?’ To which I replied, ‘ How so, Mr. Parker ? I suppose they are like other men—flesh and blood, like you and myself.’ When he replied, ‘ Why, sir I have never seen such people. Building, as they are, next door to my residence, I see, and have my eye on them from morning till night. You are never there ; for I have never met you, or seen you once at the building. Tell me, sir,’ said he, ‘ where do those people of yours live ? Do they cross the river morning and night ? ’ I informed him that they lived on the opposite side of the river, where I lived myself, and crossed it to their work, when working in New Orleans, night and morning, except when stormy (which happened very seldom), when I did not permit them to cross to endanger their lives ; at such time, they remained at home or in the city. ‘ Why, sir,’ said he, ‘ I am an early riser, getting up before day ; and do you think that I am not awoke, every morning of my life, by the noise of their trowels at work, and their singing and noise, before day ? and do you suppose sir, they stop or leave off work at sunset ? No, sir ; but they work as long as they can see to lay brick, and then carry up brick and mortar, for an hour or two afterwards, to be ahead of their work the next morning. And again, sir, do you think they walk at their work ? No, sir ; they run all day. You see, sir,’ said he, ‘ those im-

mensely long ladders, five stories in height ; do you suppose they walk up them ? No, sir ; they run up and down them like monkeys, the whole day long. I never saw such people as those, sir ; I do not know what to make of them. Was there a white man over them, with a whip in his hand, all day, why, then I should see and understand the cause of their running and incessant labor. But I cannot comprehend it, sir ; there is something in it, sir ; there is something in it. Great man, sir, that Jim—great man, sir—should like to own him, sir—should like to own him.' After having laughed very heartily at the observations of Mr. Parker (for it was all truth, every word of it), I informed him that there was a secret about it, which I would disclose to him some day ; and we separated.

"Now, Mr. Parker imputed the conduct of these people (for I have given the very words and expressions which he used ; and he is alive, hearty and well, in New-Orleans, and can be spoken to by any one interested on the subject) to the head man who conducted them, and in consequence, impressed with that belief, offered me five thousand dollars for him ; but Mr. Parker knew not the stimulus that acted on the heart of each and every one of them ; that it was the whole body of them that moved together as one mind—not one alone, the head man, as he supposed."

The result justified his calculation in a remarkable manner. The account is well worth the attention of all interested in this question.

We could adduce personal narratives enough to fill a volume, bearing directly upon the subject, but it may be said that the question relates to communities rather than to individuals, as the latter may be exceptions to the general rule.

The Count de Gasparin, speaking of the effects of freedom on the people of the West India Islands, says :

"Under Slavery, the Antilles were hastening to their ruin ; with liberty, they have become one of the richest channels of exportation which England possesses ; under Slavery, they could not have supported the shock of free trade ; with liberty, they have gained this new battle : such are the net proceeds of experience. If we still have doubts, let us compare Dutch Guiana, which holds slaves, to English Guiana, which has emancipated them. The resources of these two

countries are almost equal. English Guiana is progressing, while the cultures of Surinam are forsaken ; three fourths of its plantations are already abandoned, and the rest will follow. But the question of profits and losses is not the only one here, I think, and after having computed the proceeds of sugar, after having shown what, in this respect, English emancipation is in rule, it is allowable to mention also another kind of result. Look at these pretty cottages, this neat, and almost elegant furniture ; these gardens, this general air of comfort and civilization ; question these blacks, whose physical appearance has become modified already under the influence of liberty, these blacks, who decreased rapidly in numbers during the epoch of Slavery, and who have begun to increase, on the contrary, since their affranchisement, they will tell us that they are happy. Some have become landowners, and labor on their own account (this is not a crime, I imagine) ; others, unite to strengthen large plantations, or, perhaps, to carry to the works of rich planters, the canes gathered by them on their own grounds ; some are merchants, many hire themselves out as farmers. Whatever may be the faults of some individuals, the ensemble of free negroes has merited the testimony, rendered in 1857, by the Governor of Tôbago : ‘I deny that the blacks of our country are of indolent habits. So industrious a class of inhabitants does not exist in the world.’

“ An admirable spectacle, and one which the history of mankind presents to us too rarely, is that of a degraded population elevating itself more and more, and placing itself on a level with those who before despised it..... In becoming free, the negroes have learned to respect themselves ; the unanimous reports of the governors mark the progress of their habits of sobriety. Crimes have greatly diminished among them. They are polite, and well brought up, falling even into the excess of exaggerated courtesy. They respect the aged ; if an old man passes through the streets, the children rise, and cease their play. These children are assiduously sent to schools, the support of which depends, in a great part, upon the voluntary gifts of the negroes. Grateful to the Gospel, which has made them free, the former slaves have become passionately attached to their pastors ; their first resources are consecrated to churches, to schools, and sometimes, also, to distant missions, to the evangelization of that Africa, which they remember to do it good. We should be at once surprised and humiliated, were we to

compare the much vaunted gifts of our charity with those of these poor people, these freed men of yesterday, whom we think that we may rightfully treat with disdain.”*

The testimony already given in this report, respecting the colored laborers at Fort Monroe, that there is at least \$25,000 due to them from government, for arrears of wages, is a remarkable fact, and should arrest all disparaging reflections. It is worthy of remark, that the rate of wages allowed them is less than half of what is allowed to similar laborers at Washington and Alexandria,—and less still than the wages said to be paid to loyal slaveholders for the labor of their slaves.

We could adduce the testimony of many other witnesses to show the industry of these people, and the value of their labor, but it is deemed unnecessary. There is yet one interesting circumstance connected with the transition from slavery to freedom, that in this age of avarice, will tend to the satisfaction of all. *The value, which is ordinarily estimated upon the slave, is, on the removal of slavery, transferred to the land*, and generally in much greater ratio.

Our late friend, Joseph John Gurney, writing on this subject, says :

“We prove the correctness of a sum in division by a corresponding process in multiplication. Just so do we prove the truth of the two preceding propositions, by a fact, of which there is now taking place, a gradual but sure development, in all the islands which we visited ; viz. : *that real property has risen and is rising in value*. In the towns, both the enhancement and the improvement are extraordinary. In the country, the value of the slaves, to say the least of it, is already transferred to the land. Remember the declaration of our friend in St. Christopher’s, who had bought an estate, before emancipation, for £2,000, and now would not sell it for £6,000 ; and that of our friend in Jamaica, who sold ‘G—— estate,’ for £1,500, and now remarks that it is worth £10,000.”†

* The Uprising of a Great People, p. 199. Scribner, New York, 1862.

† Familiar Letters to Henry Clay, page 139 ; N. Y., 1840.

The author of a recent valuable work,* after quoting a letter of the Governor of the Windward Islands, to show the relative cost of slave and free labor, from which it appears that the slave labor formerly employed in Barbados to produce a hogshead of sugar of 1,700 pounds, cost £10 12s. ; while the free labor now employed there to produce the same is £3 19s. 3d., says :

" Governor Hincks, in the letter from which I have already quoted, has selected an estate which he says gives a fair idea of the increased value of land on the island. The property in question, composed of 300 acres, was worth £50 an acre, during slavery, or a total of £15,000 sterling. The value of the slaves is estimated at £11,500—the sum that the proprietor received for them at the time of emancipation. After compensation had been given, this very estate was sold for £15,000 ; and was purchased by the present proprietor, a few years ago, for £30,000, or about \$500 per acre.

" This, I can certify, is by no means an unusual price for land, for only recently, an estate of 110 acres was bought for £14,000 sterling, which the purchaser himself, had sold three years before for £9,000. It must be remembered that this land was not bought on a speculation, but purely and simply for agricultural purposes. After informing himself of these prices, and of the further great expense of manuring before the cane can be successfully cultivated in Barbados, a stranger naturally asks why capitalists are so ready to purchase. There is only one answer. The profits of sugar growing with free labor, are amply remunerative, and were never more so than they are at present."

The same authority shows a wonderful increase in the prosperity of the British West India Islands since the emancipation of slavery. Speaking of Barbados, he states that with less than half the laborers now engaged in the cultivation of sugar, that colony exports nearly double the quantity she

* The Ordeal of Free Labor, by Wm. G. Sewell, page 53. Harper & Bro., 1840.

exported during the most favorable year of slavery. And speaking of Antigua, he says :

"For ten years preceding the emancipation of slavery, the period of the island's greatest prosperity under slavery, its average annual exportation was 12,500 hogsheads, with a field force of 18,320 laborers, one third of whom must be held to have been non-effective. From 1840 to 1850 the annual average was 13,000 hogsheads, and from 1850 to 1860, it rises to 13,500 hogsheads, of decidedly superior weight, with a field force of 6,000 laborers."*

In his summary we find the following paragraph :

"In the exports I have made mention of sugar only; but if all other articles of commerce be included, and a comparison be instituted between the import and export, of the colonies of Guiana, Trinidad, Barbados, and Antigua, under slavery, and of those under freedom, the annual balance in favor of freedom will be found to have reached already FIFTEEN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS at the very lowest estimate." †

This, in a population of 391,000 souls, of which 144,000 are said to be whites, shows an average gain by emancipation of \$38 per annum each, for every man, woman, and child.

Thus we find from the concurrent testimony of unimpeachable witnesses, that when these people enjoy the rights and privileges of freemen, they are not only able to take care of themselves, but that they have, in some instances, by their industry, accomplished what few other men, under like circumstances, could equal, and perhaps none surpass.

The wealth of a country depends upon its productions ; and these, upon the labor employed to develop them. If the inhabitants consume all that they produce, they cannot increase in material wealth. If they produce less, they exhaust

* Ibid., Page 144.

† Ibid., page 315.

the soil, and verge toward poverty. It is only when they produce more than they consume that they increase in wealth. As industry tends to wealth and idleness to poverty, so is freedom to slavery. In the latter condition the laborer is without hope, and has no motive to labor, beyond the necessities of his existence, because his master takes all the surplus. Give him the fruits of his own industry and you enliven his hope, and stimulate his energy. "The love of having," which is proverbial of mankind, is excited ; and with possession comes the desire to possess. Hence arise artificial wants ; and as all these must be supplied, directly or indirectly, from the productions of the land, the increased demand enhances its value. This accounts for the well-known fact that the value of land in a free state is much greater than it is in a slave state, under similar conditions in other respects.

There is another view of this subject, bearing upon the questions which arise out of the condition of the colored refugees, which may be worth considering.

If there is any advantage in material wealth to a nation, then all the labor which is necessary to develop its resources is of proportionate value. It is estimated that the *minimum* cost of raising or supporting a man from infancy to maturity, is not less than \$500 ; and a shrewd observer has remarked that every good able-bodied emigrant of 20 years that comes into the country, is an addition to the national wealth of at least \$500. The cost of raising him being incurred by others, this country acquires him without cost. Now, if this be true of industrious freemen from abroad, why is it not equally true of industrious freemen who are natives of the climate, and skilled laborers of the soil ? If so, then it follows that every able-bodied, industrious man deported from this country, would be a loss in material wealth of at least \$500. And as Slavery, by paralyzing the industry of the white man, to that extent diminishes the sources of wealth, and Freedom, by making labor honorable, increases those means without cost by the change from idleness to industry,



it is evident that any State must gain in material wealth by a change from Slavery to Freedom ; and any man who has his farm cultivated by slaves, must gain in like manner, by putting an end to slavery, and making it the interest of all to be industrious. How easy it would be to make the change ; and how vast the importance of its consummation ! It would cure *by prevention*, the evils which accrue to the master from the desertion of his farm ; and the privations and suffering of the laborer, incident to his flight for refuge in the land of the stranger. It would put an end to the cause of the present strife ; and result in peace to our distracted country. And whether voluntary or constrained it seems the only safe solution of the present difficulties.

Until that shall take place, there will doubtless be a constant accession to the number of refugees, and a consequent necessity for help. They reach the Federal lines in various numbers, and of all ages, and mostly in great destitution. Then it is that relief is greatly needed. And when at length the weary stranger is enabled to reach a place of refuge, under the care of a kind superintendent, he appreciates the relief provided by his friends in the North. The extent of this depends upon the supplies on hand.

In reflecting upon the condition of the refugees, with a view of relieving their present wants and providing for their future support, it is evident that the chief reliance must be upon themselves. It is well that they have, in this respect, been cared for by their Maker, for vain would be the attempt of any government to provide for such a multitude ! But so far as others are concerned, we have arrived at a simple conclusion. It is briefly comprehended in the command which is binding alike upon all Christians, whether Rulers, Statesmen, or People : " All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

WILLIAM CROMWELL,
BENJAMIN TATHAM, } Committee.

NEW YORK, 12th mo., 1862.

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